

Matthew 24:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Analysis

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλίψις μεγάλη οἷα οὐ γέγονεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου ἕως τοῦ νῦν οὐδ' οὐ μὴ γένηται)—The phrase θλίψις μεγάλη (thlipsis megalē, "great tribulation") is emphatic. The comparative οἷα ("such as") introduces unparalleled severity. The temporal markers stretch from ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου ("beginning of the world/cosmos") to ἕως τοῦ νῦν ("until now") and οὐ μὴ γένηται ("nor ever shall be")—absolute uniqueness in all history.

Debate exists: Does this describe AD 70 exclusively, or primarily AD 70 with typological connection to future eschatological tribulation (Revelation 7:14)? Preterists see exclusive AD 70 fulfillment. Futurists see dual reference. Daniel 12:1 uses similar language ("time of trouble, such as never was"). Either way, Jesus portrays Jerusalem's fall as the hinge-point of redemptive history—the definitive end of the old covenant order and validation of the new.

Historical Context

Josephus's account validates the uniqueness claim: 1.1 million Jews died (some estimates higher), 97,000 enslaved, the temple destroyed, the priesthood ended, the sacrificial system terminated, the nation scattered for 1,900 years. Crucifixions, famine, civil war, siege brutality, and final assault created suffering almost beyond description. For covenant Israel, this was indeed unparalleled

catastrophe. No subsequent event—not the Holocaust, though horrific—ended the covenant order as AD 70 did.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing AD 70's historical severity deepen appreciation for Jesus's prophetic accuracy?
2. What does this "great tribulation" teach about the seriousness of rejecting Christ?
3. If AD 70 fulfilled this prophecy, how should that affect interpretations of Revelation's "great tribulation"?

Interlinear Text

ἔσται	γὰρ	τότε	θλίψις	μεγάλη	οἷα	οὐ	γένηται	ἀπ'
shall be	For	then	tribulation	great	such as	not	shall be	since
G2071	G1063	G5119	G2347	G3173	G3634	G3756	G1096	G575
ἀρχῆς	κόσμου	ἕως	τοῦ	νῦν	οὐδ'	οὐ	μὴ	γένηται
the beginning	of the world	to this	G3588	time	no	not	G3361	shall be
G746	G2889	G2193		G3568	G3761	G3756		G1096

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 12:1 (Sin): And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Joel 2:2 (Parallel theme): A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

Luke 21:24 (Parallel theme): And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

Matthew 24:29 (Parallel theme): Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

1 Thessalonians 2:16 (Sin): Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Joel 1:2 (Parallel theme): Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?